The first time Wayne had heard Guns and Roses' Appetite for Destruction, he'd thought it was quite possibly the best album ever made. Plenty of cussing, heavy music, only one obligatory ballad and even that was pretty good. Then, upon listening to it a second time, he stood convinced - it clearly was the best album ever recorded.

Now, a year and a half later, having been forced to listen to the tape thousands of times blasting from every cassette player in every car on every ride ever taken with his friends, Wayne realized that assessment may have been premature.

"Please," he begged Sean, "Please can we play something else."

Sean turned up the volume on Mr. Brownstone and said, "Nope!" He stomped on the accelerator and started singing along with Mr. Axle. "oh-OH-ohown!"

Sean's car; Sean's music.

Oh well. They were only a few minutes away from school and the blissful, dull silence of the classroom.

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"Where are you going?" Wayne asked when Sean cruised passed the exit to Edwardsville High School.

Sean cut his eyes towards Wayne and flashed a mischievous grin. "Nowhere," he said. "Just to meet Garth real quick. Won't take but a minute."

Shit. Garth. Sean grunted a noise of disapproval.

"What?" Sean asked.

"Fucking Garth, man."

"What's wrong with Garth? He's cool. He's a real funny guy."

"Looking," Wayne agreed.

"Well, yeah, that too. But he's okay."

Sean turned off the highway, then down a gravel rural route, and in short time found Garth's rusted out Chevette parked next to a dying corn field. When Sean pulled behind the car and cut off the engine, they heard Guns 'n Roses blasting tinny and awful from the small car's blown out speakers.

Wayne groaned again.

Garth came running as they opened their doors. He was small, with a narrow face and a patchy mustache/beard combo. His eyes were wild with excitement, mouth already running, and the stupid rat-tail dangling from his bowl haircut repeatedly flipped up and slapped him across the eyes.

"Hey Sean the fuck took you so long I've been here forever and I can't find anything I was so wasted is this even the right place can't be late again for school my mom will kill me and-"

"-Garth!" Sean put a hand up. "Relax. This is the right place."

"Well fuck me then." Garth finally noticed Wayne and nodded his chin. "Wayne."

"Garth."

"Well fuck help me look then!" Garth turned, went back to the edge of the cornfield and started stomping around in the dirt.

"This is something stupid," Wayne guessed as they headed for the corn. "Isn't it?"

"No," Sean sounded indignant. "We hid some beer and wine coolers in this field last Saturday so our parents wouldn't find them. We'll need them tonight for the Megadeath concert."

Wayne stopped and put his fists on his hips.

"Look," Sean said, "You can either help us or walk to school. Your choice."

Sean joined Garth at the field, and they circled each other, noses towards the ground.

Wayne took a few deep breaths. He went to Garth's car, reached in and turned off the cassette player.

"Hey!" Sean and Garth stood up as one. "Turn that back on!"

"I was going to suggest," Wayne said, "Maybe we spread out? So, we can cover more ground?"

Garth and Sean shrugged at each other. Then they started talking and pointing and eventually came up with a plan. Soon the three boys were scanning the dirt in more or less a sensible pattern.

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Three rows of corn into the field, Wayne spotted what looked like the swatch of a rag poking out of the ground. He tugged on it and loose dirt fell away from a pillowcase sized canvas bag. The bag was open-end down and the contents fell out as Wayne lifted.

The bodies of many small dogs, puppies, in various states of decomposition tumbled across the ground. Wayne recoiled first at the sight then, a moment later, the smell.

"Hey!" somewhere Garth yelled. "Hey hey! I found it!"

Wayne looked up and saw a hand holding a six-pack waving above the barren stalks of corn.

Sean and Garth were already at the Chevette, loading the trunk up with their treasure, when Wayne came staggering from the field.

"What's wrong?" Sean asked.

"Nothing," Wayne answered. "Can we go?"

"Wait! Wait wait," Garth ran back into the corn. Moments later a triumphant hand holding some sort of canister shot up into the air. "Got it!"

Garth returned to the car and tossed the canister at Sean who grabbed it, smiled sheepishly, and placed it in the trunk alongside the booze. A can of Scotch Guard.

"Jesus you don't look good," Garth said to Wayne. "You sick?"

"No. No, just...," Wayne looked back to where he had found the puppies. "Something in the corn."

"What's out there?" Garth took off again, this time trying to retrace Wayne's steps.

"Garth, get back here," Sean complained. "We're going to be late!"

With Garth away, Wayne reached in the trunk and grabbed the can of Scotch Guard. He rattled it next to Sean's head.

"Yeah, I know. But I don't huff. I don't really think Garth does either. He just pretends to."

Wayne kept rattling.

"Knock it off," Sean snatched the can away and threw it down.

"HOLY FUCK!" Garth yelled from the field. "This is fucking sick!"

"Garth!" This time Wayne hollered at the corn. "Leave it alone!"

"Wait!" Came the reply. "There's more!"

"What's out there?" Sean asked.

"A sack full of dead puppies," Wayne answered.

"Bullshit. Really? Bullshit."

Garth continued rustling around in the corn, talking excitedly to himself. Eventually he returned, dragging with him a whole bunch of canvas bags.

"Man this is sick some fuck really hates dogs and there's a lot more of these out there too," Garth said, slinging the bags on the road next to his car. He turned one over and a mass of deceased puppies, not long dead, still fluffy with fur, rolled across the gravel.

"Jesus, Garth." Wayne turned away. "What are you doing?"

Garth started laughing inappropriately, pushing the dogs around with the toe of his shoe to separate them. "Man," he said, "some fuck really hates dogs that's like twenty of them right there."

"Come on, Garth," Sean said. "Let's go."

"No wait," Garth said. "Check this one out."

He upended another bag. Nothing but bones this time, and when they hit the ground, they blended with the gravel. Garth squatted and shifted through the skeletons. He came up holding a tiny puppy skull. "Check this out!"

Garth giggled as he took the skull to his car, dug around in the back seat until he found a tennis shoe, undid the lace, looped it through the skull's eye-socket, and hung it from the rear-view mirror.

"Check it out!" Garth laughed as if it was the most hilarious thing in the world. Then he turned on the cassette player and sang *Paradise City* to the dangling puppy skull.

"Oh, for fuck's sake...," Wayne started, then a siren went *Woop!* and red/blue lights flashed.

While trying to talk sense into Garth, they hadn't noticed the cop car that had turned onto the rural route and was coming right towards them.

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The cop's gun was in his hand. It was out of the holster. It was in his hand.

He'd pulled it just seconds ago when, while all three boys were talking over each other explaining why there were sacks of dead dogs by their cars, he shouted for them to "Shut up!" The gun came out. "Shut up or else so help me...."

The cop had a large frame, large belly, and as he squatted over the deceased puppies, his face flushed red. He reached down with his free hand - the one that wasn't holding a gun - and almost touched one of the bodies. He pulled away before making contact. He wiped the back of that hand across his eyes. Wayne noticed it was shaking.

The cop stood straight and stared out at the field for a moment. Then turn towards the boys.

"You say you found these-"

The cop started and immediately Garth burst out; "Yessir some fuck really hates dogs but we found them in the field while we were looking for some stuff we'd lost in that field but we don't know anything about those dogs sir they were fucked when we-"

"-GARTH SHUT UP!" Wayne and Sean shouted simultaneously.

"You," the cop used his gun to point at Wayne, whose knees buckled. Wayne grabbed hold of Sean's shoulder for support. "Talk to me. Just you. Everybody else better stay quiet."

It took a moment, but Wayne found his voice. "Yessir. I found a bag there," Wayne pointed towards the spot, "and it had these dead.... dead puppies...."

"What were you doing in the field?"

"My friends had hidden some beer and I was helping them find it."

"Where's the beer?"

"In the trunk sir."

The cop looked in the trunk, saw the beer. He also saw the Scotch Guard. He held it up and shook his head.

"You huff this?" he asked.

"No sir," Wayne said. "Not me."

"Then why hide it in a corn field?" The cop knocked dirt from the canister. "Why hide it at all?"

"I... don't know."

"Uh huh. And, while looking for beer and Scotch Guard, you found a bunch of dead dogs?"

"Yessir."

"Buried out there?"

"Yessir."

"But you dug them up?"

"Yes... well, no... they weren't really buried...."

"Dug them up and brought them to your car?

"Nuh... No, not..."

"Shut up." To Wayne's relief, the cop holstered his gun so he could rummage through the Chevette's trunk. Fortunately, aside from the beer and Scotch Guard, Garth didn't have any other contraband. Just a bunch of dirty clothes, shoes, fast food bags, old papers and heavy metal magazines.

The cop circled the car, stopped at the open door on the driver's side. He bent over and reached in. His hand came out holding the puppy skull on a shoelace.

"Ho shit," Sean said.

Garth started babbling, giggling at the same time, trying to explain it, until the cop un-holstered his gun again.

Garth fell silent.

The cop looked at his feet for a moment. Wayne noticed his Adam's apple bob, as if he were overcome by emotion. Then he raised his head and looked at each boy in turn, his eyes absolutely blazing with anger.

"Lots of fun, huh? Playing with dead dogs?'

"Nuh no si-"

"SHUT UP!"

In a rage the cop threw the puppy skull at Wayne's head. Shocked by the violence, Wayne fell.

"Fun...," the cop muttered. "Lots of fun here. Fun with the dead puppies...."

He went to the bags by the side of the road, nudged them with his shoe. He found one that was exceptionally gross, the canvas sagging and smeared with gore. "You," he pointed the gun at Garth. "Come here."

Garth sheepishly obeyed.

"Pick it up."

Garth did.

"Hold it open."

The repelled Garth but the policeman grabbed him by the back of his head and forced his face towards the opening.

"What's the matter, punk? I thought this was fun?"

Garth retched but somehow managed not to throw up. The cop backed away, clearly troubled by the horrible odor.

"Oh, I know. I know how to make this fun. You," he pointed at Sean. "Come here."

Sean started.

"Bring the Scotch Guard."

Sean hesitated. The gun focused. Sean moved.

"Good," the cop said when Sean was standing next to the canvas bag. "Now. Spray some in there. Don't be cheap, son. This is a party. Fun and games, right? Go ahead. More.

"Now. Huff."

Gore dripped from the bottom of the bag. Garth started crying.

"HUFF GODDAMN IT!"

Garth brought his face to the bag, crying, choking, gagging.

"Help him out," the cop told Sean. "You hold the bag. Get it tight there, tight around his face. That's right."

Garth exploded in a cloud of vomit. It went everywhere, all over Sean, all over the bag. Everywhere. Garth fell and vomited again. When he collapsed his face fell into a puddle of the disgusting stuff.

"Oh God," Sean dropped the bad and stepped back, holding his arms out to inspect the amount of chunks on his clothes. "Oh God."

"Nuh uh," the cop said to Sean, still holding the gun. "Not fair. You haven't had any fun yet. Pick up the bag. Pick it up. We've got to have our fun and games at this party. Now. Get your face in there. Get in there and huff."

A moment later, Sean lay next to Garth on the mucky gravel, sticky and stinking of vomitus.

The cop set his eyes on Wayne.

"Don't look so sad, son," the cop said. "This is a party. We've got fun and games. Join in."

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We've got fun and games....

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And from that day forth, Wayne could never again hear Appetite for Destruction without throwing up a little in his mouth.

The End

A few months ago, I inadvertently deleted my entire MP3 music collection. 35 years of digital albums gone in a blink. I'm far too old to rebuild, plus I think I may be going a little deaf, so I've started Gone Songs *which is my way of remembering those records and/or artists who have been with me as a constant inspiration throughout these many long years.*